

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MUNICH 02549 301325Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----112944 301332Z /41
O P 301248Z AUG 77
FM AMCONSUL MUNICH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8961
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUNICH 2549

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FOR EUR ANDREWS AND SEYMOUR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3 IMP/DET
TAGS: SOPN
SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO GIVE BACKGROUNDER ON TENSIONS IN
RL RUSSIAN SERVICE

REF: GILMORE/SEYMOUR TELECONS OF AUGUST 29

1. INTRO AND SUMMARY. MICHAEL GETLER, BONN CORRESPONDENT OF WASHINGTON POST, PLANS TO WRITE ARTICLE ON ALLEGED ANTI-SEMITISM IN RADIO LIBERTY'S RUSSIAN SERVICE. PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TWOFOLD: FIRST, TO REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZE ME AS OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR LIAISON WITH RFE/RL TO OFFER GETLER A "DEEP BACKGROUND" BRIEFING; AND SECONDLY, TO OUTLINE IN GENERAL TERMS MANNER IN WHICH I PROPOSE TO APPROACH SUCH A BRIEFING. END SUMMARY.

2. RATIONALE FOR REQUEST. REQUEST THAT I OFFER GETLER BACKGROUNDER CAME FROM EMBASSY BONN WHICH REGARDS GETLER AS RESPONSIBLE JOURNALIST. EMBASSY FEELS THAT IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST TO DO BACKGROUNDER HERE SO THAT ANY STORY WHICH MIGHT APPEAR
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IN POST WOULD BE AS BALANCED AND FACTUAL AS POSSIBLE. FILING OF A FACTUALLY ACCURATE STORY FROM BONN MIGHT, MOREOVER, FORESTALL POSSIBLE EFFORT BY POST'S WASHINGTON OFFICE TO PIECE TOGETHER A STORY BASED ON BITS OF INFORMATION GATHERED FROM SOURCES AVAILABLE THERE. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT GETLER MIGHT CONCLUDE ON BASIS OF BACKGROUNDER THAT A STORY ON ALLEGED ANTI-SEMITISM AT RL WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE HELPFUL.

3. RFE/RL SPOKESMAN SUSPECT. GETLER IS NOT REPEAT NOT INTERESTED IN TALKING WITH RFE/RL SPOKESMAN HERE WHOM HE REPORTEDLY REGARDS AS HIGHLY EVASIVE. GETLER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SPOKESMAN CONSTITUTES ADDITIONAL REASON FOR OFFERING BACKGROUNDER.

4. PROPOSED APPROACH. ALTHOUGH DEGREE OF CONCRETENESS WITH WHICH I WOULD DISCUSS PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE CONFRONTED RUSSIAN SERVICE WOULD DEPEND ON HOW MUCH GETLER HAS LEARNED FROM OTHER SOURCES, I PROPOSE TO APPROACH BACKGROUNDER ALONG FOLLOWING GENERAL LINES:

A) I WOULD BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME TENSIONS AND SOME CASES OF PERCEIVED ANTI-SEMITISM IN RL'S RUSSIAN SERVICE.

B) I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THESE TENSIONS SHOULD BE SEEN IN LIGHT OF VAST DIFFERENCES IN EXPERIENCE, CONVICTION AND ASPIRATION BETWEEN THOSE RUSSIAN EMIGRE EMPLOYEES OF RUSSIAN SERVICE WHO CAME TO WEST AS PART OF "THIRD WAVE " (FROM LATE 1960'S TO PRESENT) OF EMIGRATION AND THOSE WHO CAME TO WEST IN PRE WWII OR IMMEDIATE POST WWII PERIODS. RL RUSSIAN SERVICE PRESENTS, THEREFORE, BROAD SPECTRUM OF POLITICAL VIEWS, ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS AND RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES. THE SOME TIMES SHARP DIFFERENCES IN OUTLOOK BETWEEN GREAT RUSSIANS WHO ARE OTTOMAN CHRISTIANS, ON THE ONE HAND, AND JEWISH EMIGRES WHO CAME
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TO WORK AT THE RADIO AS PART OF "THIRD WAVE," ON THE OTHER, ARE MANIFESTED DAILY AT RL.

C) SOME OF THE OLDER GREAT RUSSIAN EMPLOYEES AT RL HAVE FELT AND STILL FEEL THAT RL PROGRAMMING HAS BECOME TOO COSMOPOLITAN AND LACKS THE "TRUE RUSSIAN SPIRIT." SEVERAL EMPLOYEES WHO REPRESENT THE "THIRD WAVE" HAVE SOMETIMES SUSPECTED THAT MANY OF THE OLDER GREAT RUSSIAN EMIGRES ARE ENGAGED IN A BEHIND-THE-SCENES EFFORT TO SLANT RL'S PROGRAMMING TO CORRESPOND TO THEIR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BELIEFS. THE PHENOMENON OF ANTI-SEMITISM, LATENT OR ACTIVE, REAL OR PERCEIVED, WHICH HAS BEEN A PROBLEM FOR SOVIET AND RUSSIAN SOCIETY FOR AT LEAST A CENTURY, SOMETIMES COMES INTO PLAY IN CASES OF OPEN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE OLDER AND NEWER EMIGRES.

D) AT TIMES A FEW OF THE EMIGRE EMPLOYEES AT RL HAVE BELIEVED THAT THE AMERICAN MANAGEMENT WAS SIDING WITH EITHER THE NEWER "THIRD WAVE" EMIGRES OR THE OLDER, GREAT RUSSIAN EMIGRES. I STRONGLY BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT NO REPEAT NO DISPASSIONATE OBSERVER IN POSSESSION OF ALL THE PERTINENT FACTS COULD COME TO THE AMERICAN MANAGEMENT OF RL HAD CONSCIOUSLY SHOWN PARTIALITY TO ANY EMIGRE VIEWPOINT. RL'S PRESENT AMERICAN

MANAGEMENT IS ATTEMPTING TO FOCUS THE ENERGIES OF ALL
RUSSIAN SERVICE EMPLOYEES ON THE PRIMARY TASK OF THE RADIO,
WHICH IS PRODUCING GOOD BROADCAST JOURNALISM.

E) ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO REPEAT NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT
OUTSIDE FORCES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO EXACERBATE TENSIONS IN RUSSIAN
SERVICE, IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT THE SOVIETS AND/OR
THEIR EASTERN EUROPEAN ALLIES WOULD HAVE INTEREST IN DOING SO.
MEDIA CAMPAIGN IN WEST ALLEGEING THAT RUSSIAN SERVICE IS TROUBLED
BY ANTI-SEMITISM COULD HELP TO ERODE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT FOR
RADIOS IN U.S. CONGRESS AND IN FRG. MOREOVER, ADVERSE WESTERN
MEDIA COVERAGE WOULD FUEL ON-GOING SOVIET PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN
AGAINST RADIOS AT TIME WHEN CSCE FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE IN BELGRADE
IS ABOUT TO RECONVENE. GILMORE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, RADIO BROADCASTING, BRIEFING MATERIALS
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Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MUNICH02549
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3 IMP/DET
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770313-0285
Format: TEL
From: MUNICH
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977089/aaaaagsq.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 813fe360-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1686408
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUTHORIZATION TO GIVE BACKGROUNDER ON TENSIONS IN RL RUSSIAN SERVICE
TAGS: SOPN, ETEL, US, RL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/813fe360-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009